

plant of the insect is not recorded in Malloch & Rao 1925.

In the period 8.viii.76 to 19.viii.76 when trapping was discontinuous, the numbers of *A. distincta* fell considerably and an allied species *Acritochaeta orientalis* became dominant. A significant observation was the relatively localised nature of the occurrence of the fly and its apparent seasonality. This has implications with respect to the study of *Atherigona soccata*

Rond., sorghum shoot-fly which is being continued at ICRISAT since it indicates that in this related insect diapause between the fruiting seasons of the palm occurs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ENTOMOLOGISTS,
ICRISAT, 1-11-256,
BEGUMPET,
HYDERABAD-500016,
A.P., INDIA,
June 30, 1977.

J. D. SKINNER II
J. C. DAVIES
K. V. SESHU REDDY

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24. MORMON BUTTERFLY—ITS STATUS IN BOMBAY

With the rains and the wet weather would emerge our true 'Spring' and with it would start a number of butterflies flitting about displaying their showy colours for the joy of the naturalist. It is the right time for a butterfly enthusiast to keep a look out for that showy butterfly, the Mormon *Papilio polymnestor*. In Bombay and Salsette among the 120 or so species of butterflies recorded, this insect has been put down as 'very scarce', though numbers of it may be encountered in certain years.

E. H. Aitken (EHA) commenting on the butterflies in the collection of the Bombay Natural History Society admitted in 1887 that he did not understand the distribution of the

butterfly and that it is absolutely unknown in Bombay and imagined that it was so throughout the Konkan, but became one of the most familiar species as soon as one reached a level of 2000 ft. According to EHA the butterfly did not occur in the Deccan generally, but in Poona it frequented old gardens in the city.

In response to EHA's comments W. F. Melvin recorded in the Society's *Journal* two ragged but strong in flight specimens in Sivadi (present Sewree in Bombay) woods and the cemetery in March 1889. J. A. Betham recalled of having seen it frequently at Dapoli (70 miles south of Bombay in S. Konkan) in his early days and how its appearance in their

garden used to cause a display of the liveliest interest, the younger members of the family rushing out to get a nearer view and possibly secure a good specimen (JBNHS 1889).

The next recorded instance in Bombay of the butterfly is by A. E. G. Best in 1951 when he saw two individuals at Tulsi Lake and again came across an individual on 6.xi in 1955. J. I. Alfrey, a knowledgeable lepidopterist editorially referred to Mr. Best's note of having seen an individual in the garden of 'Silver End', Strand Road, Colaba (Bombay) travelling across the harbour.

The consensus of opinion among lepidopterists was that the butterfly was a 'very scarce' migrant in Bombay until D. E. Reuben studied the butterfly (1960-62) in his garden in Pali Hill, Bandra, and suggested that Pali Hill is not merely a point on the local migration of the butterfly and that there is a seasonal appearance on Pali Hill, which he hoped might be tested by extended observations.

An opportunity of studying the butterfly at Pali Hill came my way when my services were put at the disposal of Dr. Salim Ali to work on the ten volumes of HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN. The garden around his study was ideally suited for the purpose. I first saw the butterfly on 23rd September

1970, a solo flying *purposefully* in an east-west direction, and never even alighting to feed on the crossandra bloom in the garden, the nectar of which is its favourite food in the south. From 23rd September till 27th October, a number of individuals were seen in the same steady purposeful flight, always east to west, and hardly higher than about 2 m above the ground, and never even alighting on the blooms in the garden. An exception to the above behaviour was one individual seen on 4th October 1970 at Tulsi Lake, leisurely flying from bush to bush and alighting on blossoms to feed. Observations from mid November 1970 to mid March 1971 showed that the butterfly was no more engaged in the purposeful flight as in September-October, and were flying aimlessly from one flowering plant to another to feed.

Since March 1971 I have not come across a single specimen in the Bombay area, though I have looked particularly for it, and it is intriguing why a butterfly so commonly met during certain years is completely absent in others.

After writing the above Mr. Salman Abdullali informs me of a *Papilio polymnestor* he saw at Bandra Station (Bombay) on 10th June 1977.

J. S. SERRAO

c/o. BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,
HORNBILL HOUSE, OPP. LION GATE,
SHAHID BHAGAT SINGH ROAD,
BOMBAY 400 023,
June 14, 1977.

25. NEW RECORD OF MYRMECINE ANTS AS PESTS OF BHENDI, *ABELMOSCHUS ESCULENTUS* MOENCH.

Myrmecaria brunnea Saunders, *Phidoligiton diversus* (Jerdon) and *Tetramorium smithi* (Mayr.) (Myrmecinae); Formicidae; Hyme-

noptera) were recorded as serious pests of the bhendi crop in the Instructional Farm attached to the College of Horticulture, Mannuthy,